Practical guidance for managing the health risks associated with drilling fluids

2nd edition
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This publication has been produced as a result of work carried out within the Technical Team of the EI, funded by the EI's Technical Partners. The EI's Technical Work Programme provides industry with cost-effective, value-adding knowledge on key current and future issues affecting those operating in the energy sector, both in the UK and internationally.

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The EI gratefully acknowledges the financial contributions towards the scientific and technical programme from the following companies:

- BG Group
- BP Exploration Operating Co Ltd
- BP Oil UK Ltd
- Centrica
- Chevron
- CLH
- ConocoPhillips Ltd
- Dana Petroleum
- DONG Energy
- EDF Energy
- ENI
- E. ON UK
- ExxonMobil International Ltd
- International Power
- Kuwait Petroleum International Ltd
- Maersk Oil North Sea UK Limited
- Nexen
- Phillips 66
- RWE npower
- Saudi Aramco
- Scottish Power
- SGS
- Shell UK Oil Products Limited
- Shell U.K. Exploration and Production Ltd
- SSE
- Statkraft
- Statoil
- Talisman Sinopec Energy UK Ltd
- Total &P UK Limited
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- Tullow
- Valero
- Vattenfall
- Vitol
- World Fuel Services

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ISBN 978 0 85293 751 8

Published by the Energy Institute

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FOREWORD

In 1992, the Energy Institute (EI) published the first *Code of practice for the safe handling of drilling fluids*.

The development of this second edition of the EI guidance has been steered by the EI’s Occupational Health and Hygiene Committee (OHHC) and the document has been updated by an OHHC sub-group following a literature review and consultation with drilling and well operations experts.

The aim of the document is to provide guidance for occupational hygienists in particular, but also for drilling personnel, managers and other health and safety professionals. It provides supplementary guidance to *Drilling fluids and health risk management: A guide for drilling personnel, managers and health professionals in the oil and gas industry* (OGP/PIECA, 2009), including principles of occupational health practice, roles and responsibilities, as well as specific health hazards and the suitable controls for the chemicals used.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The update of these guidelines has been steered by a sub-committee of the EI’s OHHC and the EI wishes to thank in particular members of this sub-committee for guiding this to completion:

Graham McPherson
Karen Bufton, BG Group
Sarah Leeson, ExxonMobil
Lynne Morgan, EI Morgan
Darrin Hawkes, Hawkes Associates
Damian Stear, HSE

The EI also wishes to record its appreciation of the valuable contributions of the committees’ membership, including representatives from the following companies/organisations:

BG Group
BP
C-CHEC
Centrica
ConocoPhillips
EI Morgan
Exxon Mobil
Hawkes Associates
HSE
Jaguar and Landrover
Nexen
Shell
Talisman
Valero

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is recognised that exposure to the fluids and powders used in drilling operations associated with the exploration and production of oil and gas can give rise to health risks, and appropriate measures must be taken to eliminate or control them. Health effects include irritation of the skin, eyes and respiratory system with long-term exposure potentially leading to dermatitis or chronic respiratory illness (Searl and Galea, 2011). This publication should serve as a reference document for drilling and well services personnel and their associated management, as well as health, safety and environment professionals, occupational health and occupational hygiene professionals.

The aim of the document is to provide practical guidance for managing the health risks associated with drilling fluids and will complement the guidance on drilling fluids and health risk management (OGP/IPIECA, 2009). Drilling fluids include muds, cuttings, well service liquid and powder chemicals and associated chemical additives.

The health hazards related to drilling activities including noise, vibration, manual handling, and the return fluids/vapours/gases e.g. hydrogen sulfide gas, naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM) and materials used for cementing are outside the scope of this document.

Annex A is a checklist tool provided to review possible deficiencies in existing systems and procedures with respect to this guidance.